

# TIGHTBEAM



#266

August 2013

The Springboard of Ideas

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**Britney Carter**

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### Upcoming Issues of Tightbeam:

- **October:** (Holiday Special) *Neffer Another Bad Batch*—an all-recipe issue.
- **November:** Fiction, Reviews and more, including original fiction, *The Starship Hanoi*, by first time contributor, Lawrence Dagstine.

**Tightbeam** (Hyperspace Tightbeam), No. 266, August 2013, ISSN 2329-4809. Published by The National Fantasy Fan Federation. A one-year print subscription is included free of charge with an \$18 club membership when in the United States and its possessions, payable in advance in U.S. funds. *Individual copies are available to non-members at \$4 (b/w) and \$5 (color).* *Fanzine Editors: We do participate in trade and exchange agreements.* This issue was started on May 29, 2013 and completed on July 20, 2013. The editor was David Speakman. The editors of the next special cookbook issue are Ruth Davidson and David Speakman. Submissions may be emailed to them at [cabal@n3fmail.com](mailto:cabal@n3fmail.com) or via U.S. mail at: David Speakman, PO Box 1925, Mountain View CA 94042. All opinions herein are those of the writers and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of other members of N3F except where so noted. **Submission deadline for the next regular issue of Tightbeam is October 15, 2013.** This non-commercial zine is published through volunteer effort.

# Letter from the Editor



## *When size really does matter*

Those of you getting print copies of this zine will notice a change in format due to postage prices and printing costs. This issue is a test of a new 5½-by-8½ inch booklet instead of the 7-by-8½ inch size that has been dominant for N3F zines over the past 30 years. It should provide

us a 50% cost savings in postage as well as lower printing charges over the larger zine—which may allow us to send more print zines more often to paid members.

In this issue, we wrap up the serialized comic strip *Treasure Hunt* by **David Heath, Jr.** Also in this issue, a flurry of first-time (or first time to *me*) contributors.

Our featured original fiction is the eerie *Nursery Rhymes* by **Jeannie Warner**. The author is a friend of mine who I caajoled (successfully) into submitting a short story. You can thank me (and her) by writing a letter of comment.

Two former *Tightbeam* and *TNFF* editors submitted work for the first time ... well, it's a first under *my* tenure with these zines. **Owen K Lorion** has an original SF-themed poem, while **Gary Labowitz**, who has been on an N3F hiatus for years, treats us with the noggin-teasing flash fiction piece, *Darrell's Fault*.

Repeat "offenders" this issue include, the original (Trek reboot) fan fiction, *Living Things*, by **Britney Carter**. Cartoonist **Tim Allenby** also returns with a new installment of *This is Normal*.

And, Finally, Neffers (N3F members) **Ruth Davidson** and **Dennis Davis** attended Westercon 66 in Sacramento over the July 4 weekend. Their con reports wrap up this issue in a neat little bow.

*Keep getting your geek on,*  
David Speakman

## ART CREDITS

Adrian Dadich	18
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David Heath, Jr.	19–21
David Revoy	1, 3
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Filippo & Giacomo Consolati	9
Jonas De Ro	6
Jose Sanchez	2, 22–26
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Cover Art:  
"Alice in Wonderland"  
by David Revoy

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# N3F Forum: Letters of Comment

The following letters of comment are correspondences received for both N3F publications, *Tightbeam* and *TNFF*, before July 15, 2013. All editing of correspondence is kept to a minimum - limited chiefly to the insertion of name callouts to alert readers to whom a section of the letter is addressed. Please email comments to:

[cabal@n3fmail.com](mailto:cabal@n3fmail.com)

2013.04.02

Dotty Kurtz

[dottymk@yahoo.com](mailto:dottymk@yahoo.com)

**David Speakman:** Thanks. I read the section you wrote about the *New Fanzine Appreciation Society* in N3F's NL (*TNFF 72.2*), and you are free to download any of the publications from my website at [http://lp\\_web4us.tripod.com](http://lp_web4us.tripod.com), or type Dotty's Dimensions on Google. I mostly wrote travelogues because I used to be a travel agent, and nowadays, I do some travel writing, both for fan pubs and some pro pubs.

*(As a publisher of two of the longest-running fanzines on the planet, N3F's Editorial Cabal is committed to promoting the appreciation of this cultural art form. I am pleased to pass your info along to our readers. Hopefully some of them will become your readers, too.—ed.)*

2013.04.27

Ned Brooks

[nedbrooks@sprynet.com](mailto:nedbrooks@sprynet.com)

**David Speakman:** Thanks (for *Tightbeam 265*) I was a member - in the previous millennium - and on the Directorate when the late lamented **Janie Lamb** was running things. Is **Jean Lamb** any relation? A nicely-done cyberzine - the *Tightbeams* I remember were just letters. Enjoyed the latest *Tightbeam*, especially the *LOCS* and reviews.

*(It seems that email and internet forums have*

*eliminated the need for letterzines. If you remember back in the 1980s, Tightbeam experimented with fan content. This is my attempt to continue that tradition.—ed)*

2013.05.23

Lloyd Penney

1706-24 Eva Rd.

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Thank you for *Tightbeam 265*. Finally, a calm day in this busy week, so time to write a few notes on what I find here.

The letter column is expanding! Good to see. The conversation between readers is what has driven fandom from its very beginnings. Many of us saw **Roger Ebert's** fannish beginnings, and hoped that we could take our efforts and spin them out into something we could make a living from, or even be famous for. I guess we wanted to follow in his footsteps. Some have, the rest of us continue to try.

(Just lately, I've noticed that my last name is being misspelled in many fannish publications, and I am not sure why. Just for the record, it's Penney, just like the department store.) (*That heat wave you feel this summer is actually me blushing.—ed.*)

My letter...Saturday at Ad Astra? Actually, we wound up going for the full weekend, and we had such a good time, better than we expected. Programming was good, lots of new vendors, but most of all, greetings and hugs from old friends, some we hadn't seen in years. Yvonne and I were on the committee for 30 years, and were concerned for the con's future...those fears were groundless, and it carries on with fresh blood and new ideas.

Great fiction from **Keith McDaniel** and **Jean Lamb**, congratulations to both, and compli-

ments to all the artists. Fun cartoons, interesting strips and amazing artwork, especially those pieces in full colour. **Sarah Harder** must be enjoying her job with some of the wonderful stuff that gets sent to her.

I've run out of fanzine, so I must be done. Many thanks for this issue, and please do keep them coming. I know some don't like the .pdfed e-zines, but for those of us with little storage space (left), it's amazing how many e-zines can fit on a 16Gb USB drive. Many thanks, take care. Enjoyed the latest

*(I'm a sucker for paper, myself. But, I must admit that electronic published has driven the cost of producing fanzines down to close to nil, aside from software costs. It's a wonder there are not more zines instead of fewer. I blame Facebook and blogs.—ed.)*

**2013.05.27**

**Kent McDaniel**

**kentmcdanielband@yahoo.com**

I enjoyed the latest *Tightbeam*, especially the LOCS and reviews, but my favorite part was your tribute to **Roger Ebert**. He was an exemplary critic and frequently expressed his appreciation of sf fandom. He wrote a very nice piece about his involvement in it a few years back, and *Asimov's* reprinted on their website. If anybody wants to read it, it's at: [http://www.asimovs.com/issue\\_0501/thoughtexperiments.shtml](http://www.asimovs.com/issue_0501/thoughtexperiments.shtml).

On a matter completely unrelated to last issue, I wonder if any Neffers remember **Roger E. Gilbert**. He was a prolific and popular fan artist in the Fifties and Sixties, and he also published three stories in the prozines, one in *Galaxy*. Anyway, ten years after his death in 1993, a trove of some four hundred of paintings and black and white drawings surfaced. They pretty much just sat around the gallery that bought them for another decade, but a lot of them ones have sold over the last year, for some reason. His personal life is shrouded in some mystery, and if anyone knew him and knows any of the details of his life, I'd sure like to hear them. I admired his fan art and I think his paintings are

pretty nice, too. I did a blog post on him that contains some of his fan art, some of his paintings, and link to his three professionally published stories, which are available free on line.

My blog posts are at:

[www.kentmcdanielwrites.wordpress.com](http://www.kentmcdanielwrites.wordpress.com).

**2013.07.07**

**Lloyd Penney**

Thank you for The *National Fantasy Fan*, Vol. 72, No. 4, and it's time to get a letter of comment on the way to you. I'll get started...

Good luck on the impending elections...any club's elections are a real test of getting things right and being seen to be totally objective. Given the club's storied history, taking it into the 21st century might be difficult, especially for older members. Fandom can cling to its old traditions to an amazing degree. Running a club has to be a labour of love, and you've got to give all members something for their money, so good luck to the next president.

I have read many reviews of Baycons in past issues of zines produced by past president **Chris Garcia**, and also in past issues of Science Fiction/San Francisco, or SF/SF. If only I could, I'd hang with Chris and friends at Baycon, and know I'd have myself a great time. I know that many literary conventions have an older membership, while younger fans will go to anime, comic, gaming and media SF cons. I am not sure the older fans can do anything about that, for interests will change, and SF literature is no longer the heart of science fiction as a whole. I cannot speak to the criticisms of the convention, but conventions do come and go as interests change, as committee members come and go, and as the expectations of attendees change.

*(Unfortunately, Chris was in Kansas City at ConQuest—and I think he had a little more fun than we did here in Silly Valley.—ed.)*

Time to fire this off to you...it's Sunday night, and a busy week is already planned. Many thanks for this issue, and I will look for more.∞



Childhood rituals are living things, handed down from older sibling to younger, connecting humanity to the forces of fate and nature. Shop boys from the Draper's found the final sign on a Saturday late in June, just outside the public house by the back step. The three boys gathered around, heads touching as they stared down at the sight before Timony was dispatched back to find the girls. "Best send for Lia Tyler. It's still Lia, right?" Nods back and forth supported this supposition, for if there was another leader of girls, Lia had not informed anyone of it to make it official.

Timony dashed off the short distance to the street and around the corner to the candy store. Lia's uncle owned that childhood mecca, which insured her rank over all the other children in importance; and Lia was still a child for all she had been dragged indoors to start her civilization as a Young Lady. The boy dumping refuse behind the grocers joined the two remaining to stare at the dead thing, and there was a great deal of shuffling feet in the dirt and hands thrust deep into pockets as the boys waited for the arrival of the final authority.

Lia herself was ill disposed to run at the beck and call of boys standing below the window of her mother's parlour above the street. Her eventual arrival in the alley with her younger sisters trailing in her wake was as dignified as the nine and a half year old could manage it. Her afternoon's embroidery sampler dangled from an apron pocket, and she wiped at yellow custard stains on her cheek as she arrived. Reaching the

crowd who parted for her, Lia stopped at the heart and crossed her arms and stared down at the small dead creature.

"Well, that's it then," she pronounced in appropriately solemn tones. "Two tailed lizard, sure enough. Guess we'd better do it." A rustle of unease greeted her words as all the children gathered didn't quite dare to look at one another.

"I got tuppence. I can get the bread," volunteered young John at last, displaying the coins in a grubby hand with pride in his wealth. "I can get some salt," added his brother Chas, eager not to be outdone. "Got a rowan tree," reminded a third boy, and they all agreed to drop by and pull a twig.

Lia nodded her approval. "I'll get the girls to make garlands. The rest of you pass the word. We'll all have to meet here in the store, midnight." And with a tilt of her head, she led her sisters off to the tree line by the small park to start plucking aprons full of wildflowers.

The boys split up to travel up and down the very few streets of the small hamlet, and stopped by each child playing in the street or sidewalk with a quick whisper. Eyes sparkled with the unexpected secret, and play was abandoned as the boys went off to be especially helpful to lull suspicion. The girls all found their way off to join Lia at her tasks gathering flowers from hedgerow, while each boy finished his chores early, and his sisters' too.

Chas and John stopped outside the bakery to purchase the bread and paused, looking in

through the windows at the Baker's apprentice for a long moment. "Do you think we should ask him?" Chas asked at last, uncertainty in his tone.

"I don't know. He did it five years ago when he was nine. Maybe you can only do it once?"

"Lia said everyone." They considered the matter for a long moment before Chas took a deep breath and pushed inside the door.

A tall boy swept the floor in front of the bread counter with a willow broom, dark of hair and eyes, and awkwardly caught between childhood and the promise of the man he would become. He looked up with a grin that faded into a quirk of curiosity as he regarded the uneasy newcomers. "Eh? Buying anything?"

"Hey Michael. Mm hm. Bread." John held out his tuppence, and launched into the telling, words tumbling over themselves in his narrative. "Willie broke his leg 'n the front steps of the Church the Sunday last. Ya know the milk arrived from MacNulty's dairy twice spoiled on th' Mayor's doorstep. The lizard. We gots th' lizard. So we need bread an..." There was a pause while they all looked toward the sky outside the window, remembering the unseasonal thunderstorm yesterday, the coloured lightning in the clouds. This last required no words.

Michael Stevens sighed heavily. His hands tightened briefly around the broom before setting it to lean in a corner with care. "Lia says tonight, then?" Both younger boys nodded earnestly, staring up at the much taller boy. "I'll be there," he averred quietly, and offered up a loaf for John who took it and fled after dumping his coppers on the counter.

Near midnight all those that were not yet men, and those that were not yet woman slipped out of their houses through windows with coats or shawls draped over them. Each child poked a pebble into their shoe, and fingered a twig of rowan in their pocket. In little family groups, some holding hands, they drifted through the shadows cast by the lamps in the street to the candy store, and stepped over the smudged apron that was carefully placed over the saddle at the threshold of the candy store to blur where

the entrance started and stopped.

Inside, the candy shop looked like a cathedral at night, with the only light from the wide window facing the sidewalk. The gaslight from the lamps in the streets streamed through jars of sugared treats of red, green, and yellow into a kaleidoscope of stained glass that patterned oddly underfoot. The store boasted one of the few tile floors in town, checkered black and white, with white pillars flanking the closed door that led to a back room, the stairs, and the residence above.

Lia was already spreading a pillowcase in the middle of the floor when the others started to arrive. She looked up and half smiled a greeting before recalling the solemnity of the occasion. Finger to lips, she gestured to each as they arrived with a tilt of her head or a pointed stab upward indicating that they shouldn't wake her parents that snored above.

She called for the bread and the salt first. John's loaf was deposited in the center, and Chaz produced a handful of salt from a kerchief to pile beside it. The youngest girl toddled forward, a small clutch of wildflowers in her chubby fist, to lay them on the cloth beside the bread and salt before looking up anxiously for Lia's queenly nod of approval.

Lia moved things a bit, arranging the piles in a triangle on the fabric. The rest of the girls fanned out to lay garlands on each boy's head, who ducked their head to receive it and murmured polite thanks to go with the occasion. Even the twins Jim and Jenny Miller, who were known to fight like cats and dogs, were formal to one another as she placed a garland on his head and he thanked her.

Michael arrived late and a little out of breath. "Sorry," he whispered. "I had to finish sweeping out the ashes for the ovens." He knelt to receive the last garland from the Lia herself, who grinned just a little at the gallantry before schooling her expression once more.

The town girls, now empty handed, gathered in a cluster under the window, each of them casting a shadow on the tiled floor from the gas lamps outside. The boys formed a circle around Lia, who produced a purloined cravat of her

father's and tied it over her eyes. The girl stretched out both hands and started spinning slowly deosil. The other girls started to chant in a sing song tone as the circle of boys moved widdershins around her in silence.

*Broken cross and thunder's ring,  
Offerings of home we bring.  
Two tailed serpent, red in flame,  
We gather here to dance the game.  
Mischief bubbles, let it in  
By our hands be safe again."*

Shadows danced and gathered, darkening the edges of the glass jars. The patterns on the floor flickered and danced into lines of ancient runes that dissolved as quickly as one might focus on them. Shadows cast by the girls heads elongated, like the stretch darkness at sunset.

Three times three the rhyme was chanted before the spinning girl stumbled and fell forward. With a quick half step and a bump of his hip, Michael nudged aside young Chaz and caught the Lia in his arms. The voices fell silent and the circle stopped, every child staring at the pair with uneasy eyes. The older boy kept her steady with one arm about her shoulders, loosening the blindfold with the other to bring it down around her neck.

Distress bloomed on her face. "Oh! Oh, I'm so sorry!", Lia said, moved to sound at last the young girl she was.

"Don't worry about it," sighed Michael. He cast a quick glance around at the other young boys' pale faces, illumined by moonlight and lamps through the windows. "Better me'n them. I already got thrown out of the house from last time." Chaz swallowed hard, trying bravely not to look as though he'd just been spared a hanging.

"Go on then," Michael nodded to the rest, voice soft but firm as he held Lia through the end of her dizziness. The children turned to file out, passing the pair of them. The girls slipped out first, and the boys each touched Michael's shoulder as they passed.

"Bad luck there," John offered low.

"Come by for breakfast," another offered,

adding, "You know. When you can." Each child hopped lightly across the threshold, not touching the fabric with their shoes. Off they disbursed into the night, solemn and, in many cases, quietly relieved.

When it was only the two of them left in the shop, Michael let go of Lia. He turned and leaned over to rip off a piece of bread. He then dipped it into the salt, catching up a few crystals to crunch and chew the piece with slow deliberation. Lia watched him sadly, rubbing at her eyes at last with a yawn. Shadows moved in the stillness, the lines on the floor slithering up the boy's legs and chest to tangle in his hair. As each shadow passed across the boy's face, Lia's sadness grew heavier on her lips and in the droop of her small frame.

"I'll see you to bed before it starts," Michael offered, his voice rougher and deeper. He took the little girl's hand and walked her toward the stairs behind the counter. At the first step he swung her easily into his arms and carried her up stairs that neither creaked nor groaned as was usual. More shadows played along his back and then melted into the homespun cloth, wriggling slightly before going still.

Michael paused at the top of the stairs to listen for the movement of adults, then turned for Lia's open door and placed her down just inside. The youth exhaled heavily, shoulders flinching slightly as the last of the shadows found their way into his cuffs. Eyes old with ancient weight looked down at Lia's fair crown. "All will be well," rumbled a voice that was not his own. "You have done correctly. Back to bed with you, and have sweet dreams of the mid-summer festival."

The door closed with a click. Michael tread lightly down the stairs, pausing in the middle of the floor to gather up the pillowcase into a bundle that he knotted and tucked inside his shirt.

A cold, mean little smile twisted his lips, and with a deep breath of night air, the boy bounded out of the shop, running toward the bookstore next door. The lantern light on the village green twisted multiple shadows that twisted off from his feet in all directions, each of them seeming to move independently. There was a sound of



breaking glass, of ruffled pages and thumps of things falling. And on down the street, a dog howled. Two cats took up to fighting on a fence.

By dawn, no cow was in any shape to be milked due to exhaustion. No chicken would lay, nor ducks. Windows were broken in, hearth fires extinguished in their stoves, and three of the glass globes in front of the church had been broken. Every bottle of milk left by the doors was spoiled, thick and sour. In the nearby fields fences were pulled down in spots to leave cattle and horses grazing, spooked, while not one of the towns' five prized motorcars would start that day or the next two days after as their owners sweated and swore with banging tools.

Through all the rest of the week, many adults marveled at how helpful and good spirited the children of Three Oaks were. Not like those lazy, good for nothing city children they read about from the Times.

All but one, that is. The Baker put up a sign advertising for a new apprentice. His old one, he was indignant to say, ruined his shoes and clothes, slept for two whole days, and barely woke even when the man turned him out the back door with his young backside tanned for laziness.

When Michael awoke, he was lying in the alley where the lizard had been found. His body ached with bruises and thirst, and his lips were parched and dry. Someone had covered his torso with a coat, and it slid down his body as he sat up to peer around. Across the alley, the town bailiff sat on the ground with his hands propped on his knees, watching the boy.

"I got a theory," the man mused, watching the child closely. "It's just a crazy, wild sort of thought. I don't suppose kids are still playing those circle games when they find things like dead snakes, that kind of thing?"

Michael didn't answer. You weren't supposed to answer. The whole thing seemed fuzzy anyway in his head that throbbed in time with his heartbeat.

"Hrmp. Well. I played a game with my friends when I was younger than you. We didn't



want to play. But when we put it off, terrible things started to happen." The bailiff rose with a low grunt, hand on his knee to lever himself upward to go approach the boy. He held out a hand. "Come on, boy. I won a game myself once. Things got better. They always get better."

"Good," Michael croaked at last, and accepted the hand to pull himself upright. "They could hardly get worse."

"Sure they could," the bailiff assured him with a kind of macabre cheer. "China might run out of tea. Come on home with me now. We've had a spare room since my boy went off to war, and the missus could use some help around the house. Her dad used to own that candy store down the street." And off they went together, slow but side by side. "You got a name?"

"Michael."

"That's my boy's name."

Later that fall, the harvest was particularly splendid and bountiful. ∞

---

*Jeannie Warner is a writer based in Silicon Valley in northern California.*

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## DARRELL'S FAULT

Darrell was walking across the playing field with his head down. He was thinking about the assignment the science teacher had given the class: explain anti-matter in simple terms.

He was struggling with the concept when he noticed that there was a large shadow above him. Darrell looked up. Ahead of him stood Bruin, the biggest, meanest boy in class. Bruin wasn't actually his name. It was actually Brian, but all the kids started calling him "Bruin," and it stuck. Actually, Bruin sort of liked it.

"Well," he growled, bear-like. "Have you got it?"

"Uh, no," squeaked Darrell. "I'm still working on it."

"Working on it? Ha! While walking out here by yourself?" Bruin obviously wasn't impressed.

"Well, I'm starting to get it," Darrell began. He stopped.

Bruin nodded. "Okay. Just remember we need four copies, all different, for Friday. And it better be good."

He gestured to his group, who had stepped into a loose ring around Darrell when he had stopped. Two of the group – one on each arm – grabbed Darrell and pulled his arms straight out from his body.

The third dropped down behind Darrell and wrapped his arms around Darrell's legs. Darrell was held, cross-like, immobile in front of Bruin.

"This is meant to help your brain process," said Bruin. "And maybe speed up the work a little. We get the papers on time or this is just a taste."

Bruin punched Darrell in the midsection, hard and efficiently. Darrell sagged, but was

held up by Bruin's supporters. Another punch, a bit to the left side; then another on the right.

When they let go of him Darrell fell to the ground, moaning and choking with spasms. "Yeah, yeah," he was trying to say through the gasps.

Bruin looked down on him and chuckled, "Okay, boys," he said and turned to walk off. The others fell dutifully into a group behind him and they all left. Darrell was alone.

"I wish," Darrell thought, "I wish, I wish ... I could throw myself at Bruin and annihilate him ... just blow him to pieces. I wouldn't even care what happened to me." Darrell rolled over onto his side. He looked up at the sky.

"Hey, wait a minute," he said quietly to himself, "that's it!" A clear idea was forming in his mind about matter, anti-matter, matter, anti-matter. He struggled to his feet and started painfully on his way. He thought he could get that assignment written now, now that he felt he understood the concept.

The row of green dots above Darrell's head had almost all changed to red. There were only two dots left, and in the next few steps Darrell took, they too turned red.

Grayzard stared at the screen. "Oh, cranger," he said. "that's still not the right way." The screen read, "Game Over." Grayzard slipped his hand appendages out of the control slots on each side of the controller and flipped the on/off switch. Click! And the screen went blank.

"Boy," Grayzard thought, "I wonder if I'll ever get through this scenario. This episode is taking forever." He tossed the game box onto the desk and got up. It was almost time for dinner anyway and he felt tired and hungry.

As he turned to go to another cubicle he never noticed the two red dots hanging in air above

his head. (Really, how many grovers go around looking up above their own heads?)

But when the next to last dot turned red Grayzard felt utterly exhausted. He stumbled a few feet toward the door and then collapsed. The last dot went red.

Somewhere, off in the distance, far removed from reality, there was a faint "Click."∞

---

*Author's note: This story is an anti-novella. Under no conditions is it to be placed on top of a novella you might have been reading. The results may cause a small explosion, scattering letters, digits, and symbols all over the room. An "I" in the eye can be very painful and detrimental to further reading.*

---



## Original Poetry

Owen Lorion

A capital ship for a Martian trip  
Is the "Teapot," a ship so fine  
No solar storm can do her harm  
Nor pulse her computer's mind.

The course once set, she does the rest  
In a parabolic flow  
The vectors found by a man on the ground  
Who never to space would go.

We're breaking free of gravity  
And leaving old Earth behind  
The planet ahead is colored red  
And what do you think we'll find?

Our pilot is bold, he follows his nose  
He'll shuttle us down to Mars  
And once we land he'll cross the sands  
To explore the colony's bars.

Our engineer she has no fear  
Our engines she keeps in trim.  
She'll polish the tubes with sugary cubes  
That she swears gives them extra vim.

We cross the skies with our doctor wise  
Though he dropped out of medical school.  
No germs out here in the vacuum clear  
So he's little to do but drool.

There's our cook, he's by the book  
A pity it's not about food  
He keeps his pet rock in his recipe box  
Our meals are so oily they're crude.

Now by and large our captain's charge  
Is to keep us all safe and sound;  
The passenger list of colonists  
And the stowaway kid he found.∞

# RE: The Review Section

Unless otherwise indicated, the reviews editor compiles and writes the review section. Members of the N3F are invited and encouraged to submit reviews, preferably by email, although postal mail will be accepted. If you send a review by email and do not hear back within a reasonable length of time, please write to check on its status. Publishers: We are especially interested in receiving new books to consider for review. Heath Row, P.O. Box 372, Culver City, CA 90232; [kalel@well.com](mailto:kalel@well.com).

**Editor:** Heath Row (HR). **Contributor:** Angela Myers (AM) and David Speakman (DS).

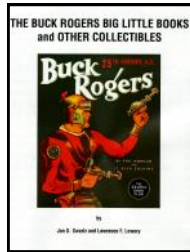
## BOOKS

*The Buck Rogers Big Little Books and Other Collectibles*, by Jon D. Swartz and Lawrence F. Lowery (Big Little Book Club, 2013)

N3F member Jon Swartz teamed up with a fellow Big Little Book Club member to create this 92-page full color guide to Buck Rogers fandom—with an emphasis on the Big Little Book collections of reprinted Buck Rogers comic strips from 1933 on. The publication also catalogs most forms of collectible merchandise and quite a few fan-made collectibles for the character first created by Philip Francis Nowlan for the August 1928 issue of *Amazing Stories*.

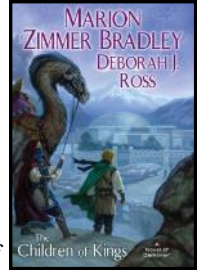
The authors detail the fascinating story of how the original story and characters were changed and marketed savvily from the 1920s to the 1980s, including full-color reproductions of advertisements and posters. In addition, they document Rogers's appearances in radio, television and film—contextualizing and tracing the historical roots of the people, races, and storylines of the Buck Rogers universe.

An added benefit to science fiction and fantasy scholars: The authors include a detailed annotated bibliography of the work as well as a fictional character index for easy cross reference. (DS)



*The Children of Kings*, by Marion Zimmer Bradley and Deborah J. Ross (DAW, 2013)

This is the latest Darkover novel by Ross, who shares joint writing credit with the long-deceased Marion Zimmer Bradley. When Ross took over the Darkover series, she said she sat with Bradley at length, outlining novels and story ideas. A series of novels followed where



Bradley's voice came through loud and clear, even though they were written and published well after her death. As Ross's tenure in Darkover continues, this latest novel feels like the first one Ross has written without Bradley's voice or style. The signature inner emotional angst, neuroses, brooding, and the grand romances typical of a Bradley work is gone. Instead, Ross's writing voice shines through as romance is replaced by intrigue and adventure.

This book follows the adventures of Prince Gareth Elhaly in the first novel almost completely set in Darkover's Dry Towns to find out if the Terrans have returned to Darkover after the World Wreckers left the planet a generation ago. The novel delves into issues of individuality vs. social pressure to conform to cultural traditions—particularly in regard to gender and class. It also looks at how male gender privilege can be exploited.

From the outset, it is obvious that Ross did her homework researching what she could find that Bradley had written about the Dry Towns (which was not much) and expanded it to be relevant to readers living on 2013 Earth. Under Ross, the culture of the region is very similar to the Middle East or South Central Asia—if the inhabitants were paler and blue eyed.

The book was enjoyable and is a must-buy for any Darkover completist (of course). But, in retrospect, it is by no means among the best of the Darkover books written or co-written by Ross. My impression is that Ross was writing in the mode of a Grand Epic Trilogy author for the first four-fifths of this novel. Then, at about

80% done, the epic-ness of the trilogy is truncated into a rushed ending that only takes a few chapters to conclude. That sprint to the end left me a little flat as it neither fit the tone nor style of the first 80% of the book—nor did it wrap up story arcs in a satisfying way.

That said, for the Darkover fan, Ross's depiction of Dry Town society in the first part of the book is fascinating and very well done. Ross also successfully plugs many ongoing plot holes and unanswered questions in regard to Darkover world building inconsistencies and its races, making the book a valuable addition to a Darkover fan's library. (DS)

***Poltergeist*, by Laura Resnick (DAW, 2012)**

This novel has one of the better first sentences I've read: "I became convinced that something strange was going on at Fenster & Co. when a singing tree tried to strangle me." I don't know anyone who could read that sentence and not want to know more. The book does a pretty good job of delivering on that promise for the first two chapters as one Santa is attacked by demons in the elevator and a lost child is traumatized by another Santa, who tries to eat him.

Then the third chapter bogs down as we're introduced to all the members of the Fenster family, living and dead, and their personalities, peculiarities, and histories. But if you're like me, by now you like Esther Diamond, the protagonist, well enough that you're willing to skim to the next chapter to find out if it picks up again. And it does.

Esther is a struggling actress who fills dry spells between roles with related jobs, such as working as an elf in the Fenster & Co. Christmas display. Her co-workers include an assortment of Santas with amusingly descriptive names ranging from Drag Queen Santa to Moody Santa, and a bevy of other elves, each with their own personality quirks. Of course, there's a love interest: Detective Connor Lopez, who is investigating a series of hijackings of Fenster shipments. The scene in which Esther meets his parents for the first time is laugh-out-loud funny.

Add to this mix a full moon that falls on the

winter solstice, opening the door to hell, and we have the recipe for a fun paranormal mystery for Esther and her 350-year-old sorcerer friend to solve. Therein lies my only other concern about the book: The villain was exactly who I thought it was after I slogged through chapter three. I like to have to work harder to solve the mystery. Still, I'd call *Poltergeist* a fun, light read that's well worth your money and time. (AM)

## MOVIES

***Apollo 18* (2011) [R]**

The premise of this film is that the last secret manned moon mission by NASA was the Defense Department's move to confirm that the Russians had secretly landed on the lunar surface, but something went horribly wrong. The film was supposedly compiled from film shot by the astronauts themselves.



The "found footage" horror movie concept killed this movie for me. It would have been much better had it been filmed as a straight-up period piece of fiction. That's because the film's plot concept itself is fairly compelling: Russians secretly land on the moon and find something that is deadly. A similar plot was successful when John Carpenter remade *The Thing* in 1982—and it is still terrifying today.

The main actors—Warren Christie (*Alphas*), Lloyd Owen, and Ryan Robbins (*Sanctuary*, *Falling Skies*, *Caprica*, *Battlestar Galactica*, *Stargate: Atlantis*)—are outstanding. It's just that the hack premise made the movie more of a gimmick than the thrill ride it could have been.

There are worse movies than *Apollo 18*, but there also are many better movies more worth the time investment. (DS)

***Beautiful Creatures* (2013) [PG-13]**

This film based on the novel by Kami Garcia was written and directed by Richard LaGravenese. More than slightly influenced by *Wuthering Heights*, the movie falls flat—but not for lack of trying. Upon watching it, it looks like Warner Brothers was trying to develop a cross between Harry Potter and *Twilight*. That's what it got—sort of.

The resulting movie is a romantic gothic romance with comedic elements. It's also creepy—but not in the thriller way. It's creepy in the “bad touch” way. The plot involves overtly exploiting the sexuality of girls and boys under the age of 18. The fact that the actors (Alice Englert, Alden Ehrenreich) who are portraying those early-teen characters are in their 20s only heightens the “ew”-factor.



Then there is the scene-chomping overacting of Jeremy Irons, Margot Martindale, and Emma Thompson, who push this film firmly into the realm of camp. If it had stayed there, it would have been a bizarre comedy with a twisted bend. Instead, the wonderful Viola Davis delivers a grounded, serious performance that otherwise would have worked. But here, it gives the film a case of schizophrenia that makes it near unwatchable as a whole.

That kind of mixed message is a sign the director has lost control of the movie. That is too bad, because under more skillful hands, this film could have been so much better if it had a unified tone. It is a good-looking film, but I cannot in good conscience recommend it. (DS)

### Cloud Atlas (2012) [R]

I, for one, am tired of “art films” with science fiction settings devolving into anti-science or anti-science fiction lectures. Thankfully, *Cloud Atlas* is not one of these films. But, make no mistake, it is an art film—which means its tone and mood may be a little too obscure and nonlinear for folks who want a movie with a hero and a definite beginning, middle, and end.



This film does not explain how it does it or why it happens, but it apparently takes place in different times on different planets in alternate universes. Every actor plays at least three different parts—some up to six parts. Depending on the universe, the actor's race, age, sexual orientation, and gender fluctuates.

At first it seems a mishmash as the narrative skips around until it becomes clear that we are

witnessing epic love stories that cross space-time constraints. The film is gorgeously shot; the art direction is phenomenal. Neffy Award-winning pro artist Jonas De Ro painted the digital backdrops used in some of the scenes. It is a treat to watch the talents of Tom Hanks, Halle Berry, Jim Broadbent, Hugo Weaving, Jim Sturgess, and Hugh Grant stretch as they change roles (and sometimes genders). It's occasionally challenging to identify them under heavy makeup.

But for a film about the quantum connection of two beings that brings them together repeatedly in different universes, *Cloud Atlas* falls flat in allowing the audience to emotionally connect with most of the onscreen characters. Instead, this film should be viewed for what it is: a lyrical and gorgeous-looking feast of a meditation on the value of a person despite the role they are assigned at birth. (DS)

### Dark Skies (2013) [PG-13]

Dark Skies falls apart in the third act, an all-too-common affliction of genre movies. Unfortunately, its shaggy dog of a twist ending is uninspired and leaves the film in the “meh” realm.



The film is science fiction horror and focuses on a family coping with alien abduction. The movie does OK in the science fiction, but the horror is not horrific at all. The good news is that the acting is done really well. Keri Russell (*Felicity*, *The Americans*), in particular, is fearless in throwing herself into her role. The film's failure, though, is solely in the hands of writer and director Scott Stewart (*Priest*, *Legion*) who originally made a career for himself in special effects.

The effects in this film are top-notch, by the way. But I still cannot recommend it. (DS)

### It's a Disaster (2012) [R]

This is a very dry comedy about self-involved Southern California couples at a Sunday brunch who stay self-involved after a deadly terrorist attack. The entire film takes place inside the bungalow-style



house of one couple. At times witty, at times annoying, the dialog by writer and director Todd Berger and comedic timing of the cast (standouts include the performances by David Cross, Julia Stiles, and America Ferrera) save this quirky film from being boring—that is, as long as you like movies that are more character interaction than plot driven. (DS)

### ***John Dies at the End* (2012) [R]**

If you are a fan of Sam Raimi films (*Army of Darkness*, etc.) or the humor of the late Douglas Adams—then this movie will be right up your alley. It is a twisted farce of a comedy based on a book of the same name by David Wong.

The movie follows the bizarre exploits of two slackers (David and John) in a world that resembles *Evil Dead-meets-Naked Lunch*. The biggest name stars of this movie are Paul Giamatti and Clancy Brown, who play smallish, supporting roles.

The point of this film is its farce—like a mashup of *Bill & Ted's Adventure World*. If that does not sound appealing to you—then you will not like this movie. (DS)



### ***Man of Steel* (2013) [PG-13]**

Last year, I predicted that *Man of Steel* would make Henry Cavill a household name in a similar way the first X-Men film made Hugh Jackman a star or *Thelma and Louise* made Brad Pitt a star. I stand by that statement. Wow—his charisma just leaps out of the screen and hits you in the gut, outshining every other actor, male or female.



Many people have been comparing the 2013 *Man of Steel* to 1978's *Superman: The Movie*—which is not fair to either film. The 1978 Christopher Reeve movie is a slapstick fish-out-of-water romance comedy compared to the dark, violent action of *Man of Steel*.

What screenwriter David S. Goyer accomplished in *Man of Steel* is nothing short of a complete reconstruction of the Kryptonian myths and the Kal-El/Clark Kent character to

bring Superman from a two-dimensional, bland cardboard cutout to an updated story—smashing cliché expectations to pieces along the way. Gone is the perfect moral compass of previous incarnations. This Superman struggles in his life on Earth.

The story is science fiction space opera on a grand scale, an epic tale of a dying race and its desperate attempt to avoid extinction. The film is also political—with a strong message about environmentalism and genetic manipulation. Focusing on Kal-El's struggle, the movie reveals that his powers are also a constant source of physical pain that he has dealt with on a daily basis since childhood.

There is an emotional resonance in this film—a true delving into the soul of the man who wears the cape and his search for a way to belong, in seeking advice to do the right thing. I was, frankly, surprised by the tasteful inclusion of earnest spirituality in this film as Clark/Kal-El searches for guidance.

That said, one of the most-jarring aspects of *Man of Steel*—for me—is the way it killed off the goody-two-shoes squeaky-clean Superman. The film is overflowing with powerful, violent imagery—all done very well and very loudly. This is not a film that you merely observe; director Zach Snyder beats you up with this film—it happens to you, not in front of you.

From almost the first scene, it is a breathless and noisy—and violent—science fiction action flick. All of your senses, including your sense of empathy are pounded to a pulp—in a very masterful way—while watching this film. When *Man of Steel* ended and the credits started to roll, I just sat there in my seat, letting the past two hours soak in, trying to figure out what just happened to me. I loved this film despite its too-loud soundtrack of explosions.

This was not the Superman of my childhood; this is the Superman of right now—with flaws and an outcast's humility that is palpable. Although a buff heartthrob now, the actor who plays superman says he drew upon memories as a bullied, overweight child in boarding school, taunted and called "Fat Cavill" by the popular gang of kids—a bullying victim who found no evening refuge with family as he only got to see them on holidays and every third weekend.

That brings me to Henry Cavill's performance. His Superman does not talk much at all in this film. But he acted the hell out of his part. The vulnerability and depth of emotional pain

that plays across his face—including the brave face he puts on to hide it—was masterful and draws you into the turmoil in his soul. You willingly go along for the ride. In previous versions of on-screen Superman, the villains and supporting characters had to carry the show because the guy in blue was too perfect on his own to be interesting.

Modern superhero stories have become predictable: They are either simply about slaying the dragon or too-convenient morality tales about the people whose lives are changed by meeting the hero. Not this time. With Cavill's interpretation of Goyer's writing, we finally have a Superman who is interesting enough in his own right to have the story be about him and the consequences of his choices. (DS)

### ***Thale* (2011) [Unrated (Foreign)]**

This is movie based upon Norwegian folklore. As a person who does not want to spoil movies in his reviews, this film is a challenge because it is so original that it is hard not to spoil the plot. So, I'll just talk around it.

This film was so successful in Scandinavia,

that it is getting a sequel and there are talks about remaking it for the U.S. audience in English. The genre of this film is probably urban fantasy horror—though it does not have an urban setting, per se.

The actors, all unknown to American audiences, are good in their roles. As is the technical craft of the film making and special effects. It is hard to believe that a film of this quality did not come out of Hollywood.

The one complaint I have is that in reading the subtitles, you might miss some of the fleeting foreshadowing in the background scenes. Additionally, the film is violent and deserves an R rating for the violence and adult situations. But if that doesn't bother you in the slightest, you might be in for a treat, as it is easily one of the most original thrillers in years. It also introduces an obscure Norwegian folk tale in a compelling way. (DS) ∞



## **Sexism in Science Fiction: funny how it does not look weird until you put the guy in the underwear pose.**



***Star Trek: Into Darkness***





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*From the sanctuary of his flawless white of his room, Kirk observes the wreckage of Starfleet. He stepped back from death; so many others hadn't been given that chance.*

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**T**he sun peaked over the horizon of the broken ruins of Starfleet Headquarters like the silently wailing remnants of a dying star, beams of ultraviolet rays a sickeningly empty grey instead of breathing, warming gold. Once proud structures stood like disintegrating skeletons over their own graves, waiting only for their coffins to open and pull them beneath the dirt so valiantly trying to hold them up. Construction machinery glittered with misplaced hope, each of their efforts more like a move to replace than an attempt to restore as brittle limbs crumbled under their gentle pressure. Nothing more than a frail body gasping final, wrenching breaths under the eyes of desperate doctors too human to save.

Like building a cemetery atop the smoldering ruins of Nagasaki before the bodies of the victims had even cooled.

It was quiet. He watched the destructive movements with attentive eyes, shallow breaths fogging up the glass between him and the devastation as though to block the view. His hand was wet and heavy against the window, bearing his weight even as his arm trembled under the strain, and he couldn't think to move. The PADD tucked carefully under the blanket at the foot of his bed, hidden from intolerant attitude, had played the horror of the crippling crash of the *USS Vengeance* with little forgiveness or protection; the sight of the giant monster of a starship falling from the sky like the wrath of God, ripping through buildings and bodies without second thought, was a sharp continuous pain to his heart that the sight before him only echoed. The fact that he had not taken the burden of witnessing the carnage of what had resulted from his actions ... was like prolonged drowning, a breath too short of reaching out and stopping.

*'There's greatness in you, but there's not an ounce of humility.'*

He closed his eyes, resting his head against the soundproof glass that blocked out screaming long gone, disappointed words lost to dust that traveled further.

"Damn it, Jim!" The vicious words covered the hiss of the room's door in mocking betrayal. He jerked back on reflex, eyes snapping open in exhaustion to see Leonard McCoy's furious scowl reflecting back at him. "When I said 'stay in bed', it damn well meant *stay in bed*. What the hell is wrong with you? Do you *want* to be confined to being vertical for a month? Because I can certainly arrange that if you do. And I *don't* mean the fun kind."

Jim turned slowly, hand still bracing, confronted with a red face and infuriated eyes instead of the colorless reflection; sparks of pained concern.

Did the world not move?

"Bones-." The doctor cut him off with a snapped jolt of his hand towards the bed.

"*Get. Over. Here.*" And it was so normal, so wrong, that his body vibrated with the need to just collapse, to just *stop* for a second, to just rewind and try to catch up and his lips twisted in a bitter smile he could contain, could control, and he was tired.

"I ... don't think I can move." It came out cracked, whispered, and he watched as the face of his best friend – *his best friend* – collapsed from fury to weary exhaustion that made his stomach fall and clench like diamondless coal. Before he could breathe, Bones was pressed against his side, all strong gentle movements,

the padding of his white medical uniform a tempting comfort as the older man wrapped one of his arms around his shoulders and turned them slowly. The coolness of the window replaced with the warmth of Bones' body, Jim felt his feet stutter at the contrast on the whole ten steps it took to return to the biobed.

The monitors sung serenely as Bones cautiously lowered him back against the cushioning pillows. He felt the brief, anxious dance of surgeon-precise fingers through his hair, ignored it as he struggled to shift his shoulders to move himself upright.

"I could close the blinds," Bones offered softly, dragging the blanket carefully across his chest; he felt every bump, every strand. The broken buildings still peaked over the rim of the windowsill for his eyes, like amputated limbs reaching out and unable to grasp. Accusing.

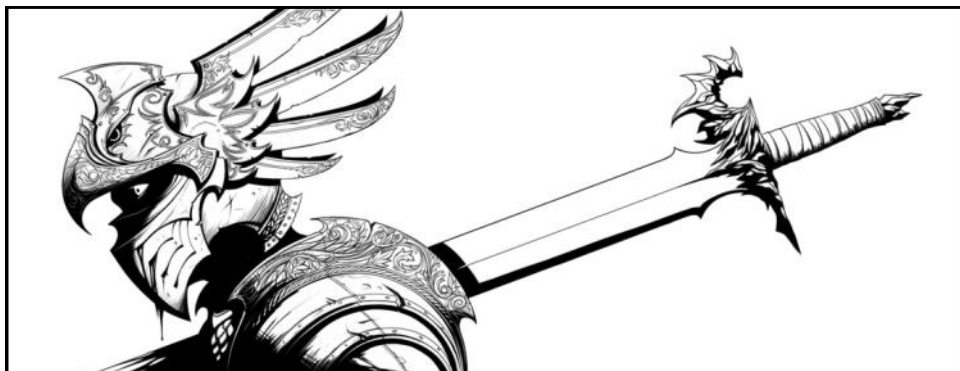
"No," he cut off on exhale, because really, what right did he have to ignorance? To pretend? "Leave 'em open."

*'You think that you can't make mistakes, but there's going to come a moment when you realize you're wrong about that.'* ∞

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***N3F member Britney Carter is a recent graduate of Indiana University at its IPFW campus. Currently living in Decatur, Indiana, a previous 'Trek' fan fic was published in the TNFF 71.3/Tightbeam #261 combo issue from September 2012.***

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RICH!! THIS WAS BEYOND ALL COMPREHENSION. MUST HAVE BEEN BUILT BY A SUPER RACE JUST AS LEGENDS DESCRIBE IT. THE MILKY WAY IS MINIATURE. ALL STARS AND PLANETS CATEGORIZED! WHAT CAN SUPPORT LIFE, MINES, EVERYTHING.

Dibs!



IT WAS INCREDIBLE

HANS WAS LIKE A ROBOT. I NEVER UNDERSTOOD WHY HE SHIPPED WITH ME. HE KEPT ME STRAIGHT. SAVED MY LIFE MANY TIMES. IT WAS A SHOCK WHEN HE SAID,

I GO OUT

WHAT, HANS. NO! WHY??

I HAVE SPOTTED WHAT IS OBVIOUSLY THE CONTROL CENTER OF THIS PLACE.

HE SHOWED IT TO ME ON THE SCREEN. INCREDIBLE, HUGE, NOT A SHIP, SOME SORT OF BUILDING AND HANS WAS OUT JETTING TO IT...

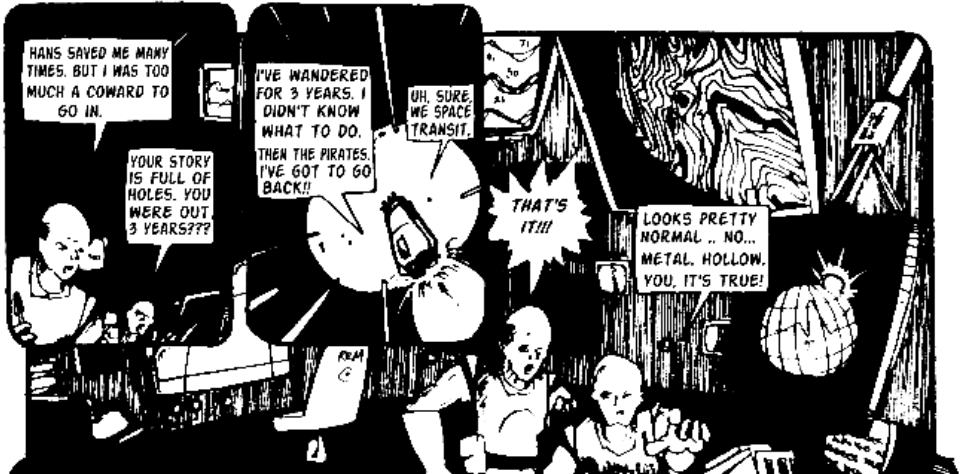
WHILE I WATCHED.

HE WAS GONE A LONG TIME. I SAT TOO SCARED TO FOLLOW. HANS WAS MY BEST FRIEND. BRAVE. I KEPT THINKING OF THE SCRAPES HE HE LED ME OUT OF. BUT, I COULDN'T

THEN...

HE SCREAMED OVER THE RADIO. IT WAS SO HORRIBLE. HE KEPT SCREAMING AND I RAN. LEFT HIM!!!

# ARRRG!



HANS SAVED ME MANY TIMES. BUT I WAS TOO MUCH A COWARD TO GO IN.

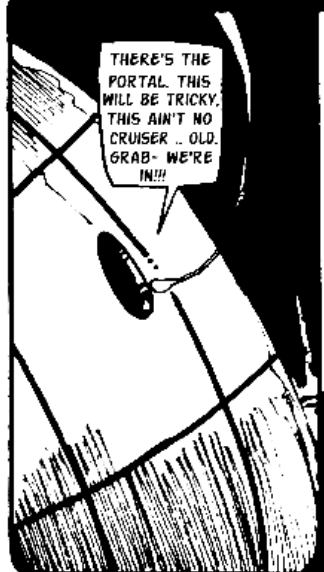
I'VE WANDERED FOR 3 YEARS. I DIDN'T KNOW WHAT TO DO. THEN THE PIRATES. I'VE GOT TO GO BACK!!

UH, SURE. WE SPACE TRANSIT.

YOUR STORY IS FULL OF HOLES. YOU WERE OUT 3 YEARS???

THAT'S IT!!!

LOOKS PRETTY NORMAL .. NO... METAL. HOLLOW. YOU, IT'S TRUE!



THERE'S THE PORTAL. THIS WILL BE TRICKY. THIS AIN'T NO CRUISER .. OLD. GRAB- WE'RE IN!!!

IT'S...



INCREDIBLE



I'M JETTING TO THE DIRECTORY I'VE GOT TO GO BACK.

DON'T DO IT. MY FRIEND.



WHAT DO YOU EXPECT TO FIND?

HANS IS WAITING!!



ARTIFICIAL GRAVITY... THIS PLACE IS HUGE. I'LL NEVER FIND...



HANS, MY GOD!!



I'M TOO LATE. THEY TORTURED HIM. HE...

KNOW THE HISTORY OF THIS GALAXY

WHAT THE...

TEN EONS AGO, THE GALACTIC UNION THRIVED. AT THE HEIGHT OF ITS POWER, IT HAD A COLONY ON EVERY HABITABLE PLANET IN THE GALAXY.

THEIR SHIPS WERE AS NUMEROUS AS INSECTS, YET THEY WERE PEACEFUL AS MICE. THEY STUDIED EVERYTHING, BUT EXCELLED IN ASTRONOMY.

CONTACT WAS ESTABLISHED BUT G.U. HAD NO INTEREST IN GOING THERE.

IT WAS FORGOTTEN FOR 9,000 YEARS

THEN FROM M21 CAME AN INTELLIGENT SIGNAL

TILL A MAURADING HORDE ARRIVED FROM OUT-GALAXY

A FIERCE WAR WAS FOUGHT. GALACTIC UNION HAD VERY SUPERIOR TECHNOLOGY

FINALLY ALL WAS DESTROYED. THE INVADERS AND THE UNION SANK INTO EONS OF BARBARISM

THIS OUTPOST WAS THE LAST PRODUCT OF THE DYING UNION. WHY THE INVADERS CAME IS NOT KNOWN TO US BUT THEY OWN THE GALAXY NOW. WHEN THE TIME IS RIPE, THEIR DESTRUCTION WILL COME FROM HERE. THE DESOLATION OF THE RACE CALLED 'MAN' - PREPARE TO DIE.

BUT THE INVADERS WERE TALENTED IN DEATH!

HEY, YOU NEED HELP DOWN THERE?

NO ... LEAVE THERE'S NOTHING HERE.

END

# OBSERVATIONS WESTERCON 66!

THE 2013 WEST COAST SCIENCE FANTASY CONFERENCE  
JULY 4-7, 2013 \* HILTON ARDEN WEST HOTEL, SACRAMENTO, CA

*Westercon 66 was held in Sacramento, CA , over the 4th of July holiday. Below are con reports from members in attendance. [Fan Art by Jose Sanchez.]*

## DENNIS DAVIS

I rarely attend Panels and I didn't attend any of the ones at this Westercon, so I can't really say much about the various panels there except that I was not interested in any of them.

I arrived on Thursday at the Hilton in Sacramento after a 7 hour drive up I-5 from Highland, CA. I was staying with June Vigil-Storm and so I just had to pick up my room key from the front desk.

So, I pick up my room key and find my way to the elevators and take one to the 7th floor which was easy enough as I was sort of early, I

guess.

When I get to the room I discover to my dismay that the room lacked a refrigerator and it lacked a microwave, and on top of that Wi-Fi costs extra if you wanted it in your room and not just in the lobby. I don't know about you all, but I expect a refrigerator and a microwave in the room without having to try to get them added and I expect my Wi-Fi to be included with the cost of the room.

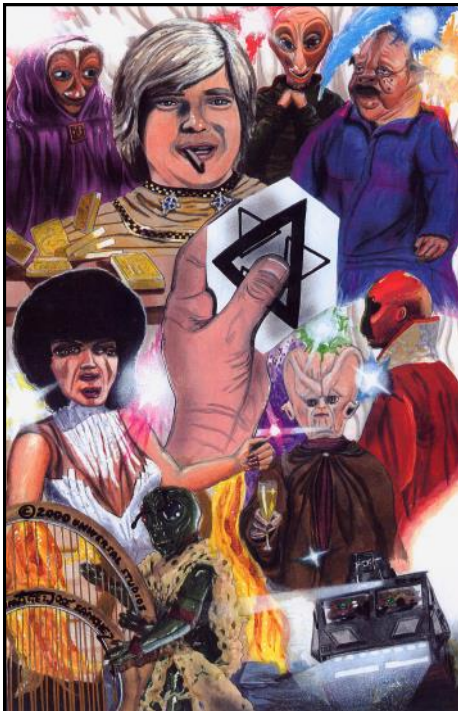
Anyway, I put my suitcase on the suitcase stand and I connect my power strip with integrated USB chargers and I grab my cars tote bag along with my iPad and go check out the hotel.

At this point, it is too early for any parties, so I wander over to the Con Registration room, where I discover that it does not open until 11, since it is 10:30 I have to wait. Eventually, the con staff has arrived and I pay the at-the-door registration fee. I am the first person to pay via credit card so it takes a little bit for the staff member to get it set up, but it works with out any problems. So, I get my Con Badge and I wander around the room checking out the various other tables and visit the LosCon one and the BayCon one and some others, also.

Next, I head over to the Art Show and after looking at what is displayed I decide to Register so that I might bid on a couple of pieces by Bob Kech.

Next, I head over to the Dealer Room, where I buy a custom 30" chain for a piece of jewelry that I have that is lacking a chain. I cruise around the room and just browse intending to come back later.

I investigate the Game room and find that as I expected it is all card based games or something based on some kind of board game. I don't think any of the games look interesting and I am nostalgic for the days when game rooms at cons had a Dungeons & Dragons game or maybe a game of Traveler or Cosmic





Encounter <[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cosmic\\_Encounter](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cosmic_Encounter)>. Cosmic Encounter was an interstellar conquest board game where each Alien had a specific Special Power that violated the normal rules in a particular way. Cosmic Encounter was originally published by Eon Games in 1977 and I discovered it at one of the Cons in the late 70s or early 80s.

So anyways, I visited the game room each day I was at the con and there was never anything interesting going on. I am thinking I will buy the new Cosmic Encounter game and take it with me to future cons.

I decide to have dinner at the hotel as Sacramento is in the midst of a heat wave and the temperature outside is in the 105F/40C range.

The restaurant prices are fairly reasonable and I have salmon and rice for dinner.

Thursday night there were a few parties, but there weren't any particularly good ones.

I don't like the Starbucks in the hotel as they don't have Liquid Cinnamon and or Liquid Raspberry flavoring which one needs in order to make my favorite Starbucks Coffee.

However because of the heat wave, I decide that I would just stay inside the hotel.

June Vigil-Storm decides to be a volunteer for the Con so I see her around here and there

the rest of the time I am at the Con.

Sometime on Thursday, I meet Ruth R. Davidson and her daughter Hazel as they are going to be staying with June and me.

Friday, I got up and checked out the Auction to see if anyone had bid over me and no one had, so I want and checked out the room with the various Con Tables and I bought a couple of shot glasses from one of them. It was an art oriented con with Froud and the Pini couple. *(That would be, Con-Volution—ed.)* I would like to attend, but I am not sure. I do plan on going to LosCon and I picked up some literature at their table.

Next I make my way to the Dealer Room and I find a number of books that I decided to purchase, most notable are a couple of trade editions of Jack Vance's Lyonesse Trilogy series, vol 2 and 3 or so I believe. I also find a seller of hats and I fall in love with a grey bowler that I decide to think about until Saturday. At one of the jewelry sellers, I find a nice couple of pendants that I want; one of them is sort of cyberpunk-looking for me and the other looks like it is jet and I intend to give it to a friend, however I ask the seller if they can get me a couple of 36" chains and they tell me that they will have them tomorrow so I tell them I will be back on

Saturday for them.

I decide to have dinner at the Hotel again as the heat wave is still going on.

It is Friday night and the Westercon in San Diego Bid has a really good party, and I decide to vote for them and I pay to be a supporter as well.

Friday night after the Party is over at about 2 a.m., there is a blackout at the hotel and I was glad that I carry a small flashlight clipped to my shirt.

It is Saturday now and once I get up around noonish I go and check out the Art Auction and no one has bid over me as yet and I am glad, I then make my way to the Dealer Room and I buy that grey bowler hat and I have a couple of pictures taken of me wearing it. Pictures to be posted to Facebook real soon now. The jewelry seller has the 36" chains that I requested and I buy the two pendants.

Around lunch time, I have an ice tea while June has lunch.

Later June, Ruth, Hazel and I meet up with Ruth's Sister and brother-in-law for Dinner and we decide at the last minute to eat dinner at the Hotel instead of at the Cheesecake Factory. I decide to have the Salmon again.

I sort of check out the Masquerade and I take a few pictures. Sort of check out as I was late arriving due to being at dinner. Again pictures to be posted to Facebook real soon now.

Saturday night and it is time for parties again. Best Party has to be the Detroit Nasfic bid, they had this great salted caramel candy yum.

I also really enjoyed the Sim-Gen Party on Friday I think, where I got to meet Jacqueline Lichtenberg and I enjoyed chatting with a couple of fans and met a writer I want to check out at another party on Saturday.

On Sunday there is not much happening and I pick up my two Art pieces that I intend to get framed. Next thing I know, I am packing and trying to make sure that I don't leave anything behind. I do a good job and everything is fine.

I leave on Sunday afternoon for home, but I have to stop at Harris Ranch Inn Restaurant some place off of I-5 in Coalinga as I am just too tired to drive 7 hours all at once. I finally

get home Monday afternoon.

As usual the Con Hotel has problems with the Elevators and one of them was out of order for two weeks prior to the Con.

From what I heard from the Chair of the Con Committee the Con was in the black and there was about 700 in attendance.



## RUTH DAVIDSON

This report will mostly highlight the panels and concerts that I attended.

First I gotta give a shout out to a few people; my mother in law who gave me a bit of birthday money which paid for the con passes and music from the dealer's room, N3F June E Vigil -Storm who shared her hotel room that I couldn't afford with me, and for N3F member Dennis Davis who mentioned to June that the only thing stopping me from going to WesterCon was funding for a hotel room. Without this I would not be writing this report at all.

### Thursday July 4th

#### *Comedy in Science Fiction and Fantasy*

Warren Frey (Mod), Steven Schapansky, Eileen Rendahl, Howard (howeird) Stateman, David Gerrold

This was an amusing panel about the use of humor. Not forcing the humor was a big thing, ya gotta write in your style instead of in one that doesn't work for you otherwise the humor does not work. Humor in dark moments is often used to break up the intensity. Yay for morbid humor! In an established universe you can also do something utterly ridiculous just for fun like "Trouble with Tribbles" or even a Trouble with Tribbles ++ after that. The key is figuring out



what your audience will accept.

After the panel I got to meet David Gerrold. I've never read any of his novels but I have read his book called "Worlds of Wonder" about writing science fiction and fantasy. After the panel I expressed my appreciation. Later, I showed him to my daughter who is an aspiring author who also read that book (minus the chapter on sex). Hazel was super shy, but he got her talking and was really great with her.

#### *Becoming a Professional Writer or Artist*

Mark W. Tiedemann (Mod), Kelley Eskridge, Cliff Winnig, Maurine "Mo" Starkey

One thing that was emphasized was the need to be a professional with yourself. Set and keep personal deadlines. Show up to "work" in your writing or your art. You gotta be in it for the long game because it doesn't come quickly. You need about ten thousand hours of practice or you have about a thousand bad drawings so you may as well get it all out now. Ya gotta be in it to tell the story, or to communicate something in the piece. The people who fail are the people who walk away. So, get up when you fall and keep going. Getting involved with small cons can help facilitate making connections with those in your field of interest. Positive relations with others has a real value. You do your art alone but you sell your work with other people.

#### *Developing the Craft*

Rebecca Inch-Partridge (M), Eileen Rendahl, Karen Sandler, Valerie Frankel, Cliff Winnig

Many books were recommended, *Steering the Craft*, *Anatomy of Story*, *Writing the Break out Novel*, *Save the Cat* (also recommended to me by Jacqueline Litchenburg, which I plan on nabbing at some point). There's also a book by Nancy Cress (didn't get the title). Suggestions included reading mindfully as in, how did the author get me to cry right there or to laugh at that moment? Edit mindfully because there is a flow and rhythm to prose that's very close to poetry. Ask yourself, where does the story actually start? Get BETA readers, especially experts in a field to help you know what you don't know, and exchange expertize since there are

things you know that someone else in the same field does not. The right critique group can be helpful (critters.org, Romance Writers of America, BASFA, cascade writers, viable paradise). Prescriptive analysis means here's how you do this, descriptive analysis is critic. "Write every day or it will always be a hobby" -Octavia Butler



### **Friday July 5th**

#### *Fight Scenes*

Jeremy Tavan (Mod), Tory Parker, Maurine "Mo" Starkey, Tony Barajas, Maya Kaathryn Bohnhoff

Mindfully read fight scenes (we're back to this mindfulness thing again). Use short sentences to speed things up. Longer sentences slow things down. You want your noun and verb as close together possible. Establish the arena of the fight up front in the description, which happens before the fight scene itself and avoid unnecessary description like using the right hand verses the left hand (unless it's important, "I am not left handed!"). Be aware of assumptions your reader will have. Of course, the main focus of your character in a fight is to survive and where they need to be so they and their group can succeed.

Consider the equipment being used

-don't drop arbitrary equipment on characters, gotta be a reason

-Consider weight and gravity, you do get tired (weight depends on what you're using it for, duration for what you need it for, 3-4lbs swords 2 hours of fighting, 7lb rifle carrying for a week)

-cutting weapons vs thrusting weapons (too

many things on it the harder it is to maneuver, the simpler the better.

-hand protection on the hilt of the sword vs a gauntlet

-swords includes muscle motions you don't use naturally, find the pattern your opponent is telegraphing and use it.

-find a way to actually work with the weapons you are using in your story because it's easier to write with experience under your belt.

-know the limitations of the weapon and the overall tech level. Layout the specs, how to recharge, etc, even in made up weapons because you can find a real life weapon to base it off of and give you a starting point.

Other things: the venue was awful, it took real effort to hear the panel since it was right in the middle of a high traffic area and there were no microphones! This was very annoying. The plus side though, Tony Barajas and Jeremy (if I recall correctly) let us handle some real swords at the end of the panel. W00!

#### *Cliff Winnig Concert*

This was fun. Cliff played the sitar which constantly goes out of tune. He played some original music as well as traditional music. Unfortunately he has no YouTube videos or anything! Sadness. It was in the same room as the fighting panel but now they have microphones, yay.

#### *Unwoman Concert*

I enjoyed her cello playing, though it's weird to see an electric cello because it has no body. She used a looping box and had a great stage presence. She played the best version of What's Up by the 4-Non-Blondes ever, which unfortunately is not how she played it on her CD. It was slower and thus more contemplative. It made the song very moving. Unwoman also got the audience to do background vocals of her song "Haunted" which was neat. She played some new material not yet out on CD. I bought some of her music.

#### *Phenomenauts*

It was loud. That's it. I could not hear individual notes or the lyrics.

It was so loud I had to leave early and my



daughter got ringing in her ears. This was while we had ear plugs in. We tried to go back for the next concert and it was just as loud. Blech.

#### **Saturday July 6th**

#### *Publishing Options*

Ben Yalow (M), Jean Marie Stine, Marty Halpern, Phyllis Kalbach, Kelley Eskridge, Emerian Rich

It's easy to self-publish, on-demand, or to use smaller presses instead of traditional. But the biggest thing in this panel was that you gotta learn the business otherwise you'll make bad decisions. Content and copy editing is super important (duh) because it takes a village to raise a book.

#### *NaNoWriMo*

Richard Crawford (M), Lisa Satterlund, Eric Shanower, Cliff Winnig

Being able to blather on for fifty thousand words is actually a good skill. You can unofficially modify the NaNoWriMo model to fit your needs. There's options for youth and summer "camp" options as well if November is a bad time. A good thing about NaNoWriMo is that your inner editor has to shut up and it makes you trust your subconscious and pour out what's already inside of you. Not all outlines are linear, you can use pin wheels and whirligigs, as you plan ahead or you can go pantsing- which is finding out what happens as you write. The book No Plot? No Problem was recommended by one guest.

#### *Ask the Editor*—Marty Halpern

Marty is an editor for a living and his big thing is use a spell check and to be consistent. Is it machine-gun, machine gun, or machinegun? Pick one! Style sheets that are a

record of people in the story and made up words, is very helpful and almost never happens, but it'd be nice if more people did that. He was also selling the books *Alien Contact* and *Is Anybody Out There?* both collections of short stories. I've enjoyed what I read so far.

*Masquerade Interlude Concert*—Jeff and Maya Bohnhoff

I don't care for the masquerade, but I went to hear the Bohnhoff's perform. It was a bunch of parodies, like *Lust on the Bridge* done to the tune of "Dust in the Wind" and "Come to Mordor" to the tune of "Come Together". This short concert was all parodies which are fun, but my favorites aren't out on CD yet, so I'm waiting for that. They do have original music which I enjoy and have both albums. Maya is also an accomplished writer but I've only read her short story, "The Boy Who Loved Clouds" which I enjoyed.

There were other filk concerts but by the time they got those printed out I missed the ones I cared about (like the Bohnhoff's). That was a bummer, I also felt that the scheduled filking could've been up on the stage set up where the other concerts were.

**Sunday July 6th**

*Bad Science*

Stephen Nelson (M), Jordin Kare, Kay Pan-nell, Ctein

Two favorite things: "The universe is not

obligated to conform to your common sense and it probably doesn't." and the term psychoceramics (I think I got that right) came up, as in the study of crack pots. The best science is when the scientist finds something new, figures out what it means, then goes out and try to disprove it and then find that it's true. The hallmark of bad science is unreasonable nit-picking vs anomaly hunting. Good science gets things right (even when a hypothesis is wrong, if it's good science we're still getting good information!) whereas bad science \*sometimes\* gets things rights.

Scientific fraud came up, like the vaccines causes autism scare. Some things are just difficult like the physics of *Rainbow Theory*. PBS News Hour was suggested as a good news source for scientific coverage.

There was not enough room for all the people who wanted to attend this panel. There were lots of people standing, myself included

*Other things:*

The Family Room was small, but they had legos which made up for the fact that the room wasn't big enough for the kids to run in. My daughter spent much of her time there with her buddy Amy.

The layout of the hotel was pretty awful for this sort of thing, it had a cramped feel to it.

People were friendly and fun, I got to see some familiar faces and meet some new people. It was a fun con and I'm glad I went. ∞

## This Is Normal

Tim Allenby





# National Fantasy Fan Federation Application

New Member   
  Former Member   
  Joint Membership   
  Gift Membership   
  Email List Only  
**Name (Please Print):** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Address:** \_\_\_\_\_  
**City, State, Postal Code, Country:** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Phone:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Email:** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Occupation:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Male:**  **Female:**  **Birth date:** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Signature of Applicant:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

## Interests. Please select any and all of the following that you're interested in or would like to get involved in

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> APAs (amateur press associations)   | <input type="checkbox"/> Fanzines                     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Art                                 | <input type="checkbox"/> Filk singing                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Audio                               | <input type="checkbox"/> Games and video games        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Blogging                            | <input type="checkbox"/> Movies                       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Books                               | <input type="checkbox"/> Online activities            |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cartooning, cartoons, and animation | <input type="checkbox"/> Publishing                   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Collecting                          | <input type="checkbox"/> Reading and book clubs       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Comic books                         | <input type="checkbox"/> Reviewing                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Computers and technology            | <input type="checkbox"/> Role-playing games           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Conventions and clubs               | <input type="checkbox"/> Round robins (group letters) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Correspondence                      | <input type="checkbox"/> Taping                       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Costuming                           | <input type="checkbox"/> Teaching science fiction     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> DVDs and videos                     | <input type="checkbox"/> Television                   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Editing                             | <input type="checkbox"/> Writing                      |

Which would you prefer?

A PDF of The Fan emailed to you     The clubzine printed and mailed to you     Both

How long have you been interested in science fiction and fantasy? \_\_\_\_\_

How long have you been involved in fandom? \_\_\_\_\_

List any other clubs you are or have been a member \_\_\_\_\_

List any conventions you've attended: \_\_\_\_\_

What prozines and fanzines do you read, if any? \_\_\_\_\_

What is your favorite type of sf/f? \_\_\_\_\_

Who are your favorite sf/f authors: \_\_\_\_\_

Are you interested in online activities? If yes, what type? \_\_\_\_\_

Which, if any, of the following would you be willing to help the club with?

Artwork     Recruiting at conventions     Writing for club publications

Organizing activities     Corresponding     Publishing

Other: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Sponsoring Member (if any): \_\_\_\_\_

TB 266

Regular dues are \$18 per year (\$22 for Joint Memberships) which includes subscriptions to the club's fanzine as well as other activities and benefits. Make checks or money orders payable to William Center (the treasurer). All payments must be made in U.S. funds. Mail dues and application to N3F, PO Box 1925, Mountain View, CA 94042. Please allow at least eight weeks for your first clubzine to arrive. You can also sign up online at <http://n3f.org>

# Submission Guidelines

## Want to See Your Name in Print?

If you've never submitted an article before, it's easier than you think. If you want to contribute, but are unsure what to write about – simply send a letter of comment on any topic (a past issue, some book or show you liked [or hated]). It's that easy. We only ask that you consider the audience's interests: we are fans of science fiction and fantasy. Anyone may submit, although paid members get top priority due to space concerns. And that name-in-print thrill? We call that "egoboo."

## Letters of Comment

Letters of Comment (LoCs) are the fan version of Letters to the Editor – except you can feel free to directly address anyone you want.

## Original Writing

We accept fiction (less than 2,000 words, please) – both original and fan fiction, essays, poetry, con reports and interviews. All writing is subject to being edited, but we usually take a very light hand. Any writer chosen for a feature will get 1 full-color printed version of the issue their work graces our issue.

## Art, Drawings and Comics

We are always looking for cover art and spot art and amusing doodles and thoughtful ones, too. We have plenty of space to fill and your art may be just what we are looking for. Any artist selected for a cover will get 1 full-color printed version of the issue their work graces our cover.

## Reviews

You may either submit a review to our official review column: RE: The Review Section, or you can submit your own feature or even include a review in a LoC, if you prefer.

## Formats We Will Accept

Paper copies mailed to us are accepted, but we prefer electronic formats. The addresses are at the bottom of this article.

**Electronic formats:**

**Writing:** We accept documents in plain text (.txt), rich text (.rtf) and simple Word format (.doc – please, no .docx). Better yet, just cut and paste your text into the body of your email.

**Art:** We accept art in JPEG, JPG, PNG, GIF, BMP, TIF, TIFF formats.

## Paper Formats

Please send only copies of your work, whether it is art or text. We do not return submissions made on paper unless the sender includes a SASE with postage fully paid.

## General Submissions

### U.S. Mail

N3F Editorial Cabal  
PO Box 1925  
Mountain View CA 94041

### Email:

cabal@n3fmail.com

## Reviews for RE: The Reviews Section

### Email

kale@well.com

## Copyright

By submitting any material to us, you agree that you claim that you are the original author or creator of this material and have the right to grant us reproduction rights to that work. You also agree your work is to be contributed for one-time use only in an N3F publication in its various print and electronic forms. All other copyrights are retained by you, the contributor. You also agree that any reproduction, distribution, or republication of any portion of your work in one of our publications in any other media is prohibited without express permission of the current (at time reproduction is made) president and directorate of N3F or by you, the original copyright holder.

## Full Submission and Editorial Calendar

A more complete and details submission guide is online: [www.n3f.org/submissions](http://www.n3f.org/submissions)

# 2013 N3F Amateur Short Story

## Story Contest Rules and Entry Blank

1. This contest is open to all amateur writers in the field, regardless of whether they're members of the National Fantasy Fan Federation. For the purposes of this contest, we define an amateur as someone who has sold no more than two (2) stories to professional science fiction or fantasy publications.

2. Stories entered in the contest must be original, unpublished, not longer than 8,500 words in length—and must be related to the science fiction, fantasy, or similar genres in the opinion of the judges.

3. Manuscripts should be typed, single sided on 8 1/2"-by- 11" white paper, double spaced, with pages numbered. The name of the author should not appear anywhere on the manuscript to ensure impartial judging. Photocopies are acceptable, if they are of good quality. Computer printouts must be legible. Email attachments of Word documents are also acceptable.

4. Contestants can enter up to three stories, provided that each is accompanied by a separate entry blank. Enclose a self-addressed, stamped envelope (SASE) if you would like your story returned at the end of the contest. Do not send your only copy in case of accidental loss; we are not responsible for lost manuscripts. Stories will not be returned without an SASE.

5. Email entries will be accepted. Send to Jefferson P. Swycaffer at [abontides@cox.net](mailto:abontides@cox.net). No guarantee can be

made of email receipt. Privacy and property rights will be absolutely respected. No one other than the Short Story Judge will ever see the submission.

6. There is no entry fee charged. While N3F members are encouraged to enter the contest, members will not receive any preference in judging. .

7. Cash prizes totaling \$100 will be awarded as follows: First prize is \$50, second \$30, and third \$20. Honorable mentions and semi-finalists will receive a certificate of award.

8. Send all manuscripts, accompanied by SASEs, and entry forms to the contest manager: Jefferson Swycaffer, P. O. Box 15373, San Diego, CA 92175-5373; [abontides@cox.net](mailto:abontides@cox.net). All entries must be received or postmarked no later than Dec. 31, 2013.

9. The Short Story Judge is a published science fiction professional, and also a loving fan of the sf and fantasy genres. All comments and critiques are solely the Short Story Judge's opinion, but he promises to be constructive and polite.

10. The N3F assumes no publishing rights or obligations. We want to encourage professional sales, not fan publication. All entries will be returned after the contest is over, if accompanied by an SASE. Winners will be notified as soon as the judging is completed. Announcements and notifications of winning entries will be made in March 2014. Please take your time and submit your best work. You can resubmit stories previously entered. All entries will be kept confidential and will be judged fairly and anonymously.

The deadline for all entries is Dec. 31, 2013. Good luck!

(Detach or photocopy. Must accompany all entries.)

Mail to: **Jefferson Swycaffer, P. O. Box 15373, San Diego, CA 92175-5373** or email **[abontides@cox.net](mailto:abontides@cox.net)**

Title of story (for identification): \_\_\_\_\_

Author's name and address: \_\_\_\_\_

Author's email address: \_\_\_\_\_ Author's age: \_\_\_\_\_

I have read the above rules for the 2013 N3F Amateur Short Story Contest, and I agree to them.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

# Upcoming Issue Needs



**SEPTEMBER  
2013**

**TNFF 72.5**

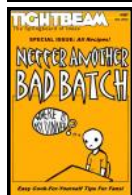
**STILL NEEDS**

*Elections Issue*

Interior art, con reports, bureau reports & fan news.

Deadline:  
Aug 15, 2013

Edited by:  
David Speakman



**OCTOBER  
2013**

**TIGHTBEAM #267  
SPECIAL: Cookbook**

**STILL NEEDS**

This Special Publication of shared recipes.  
Needs—Recipes, food and recipe SF/F-themed interior art.

Deadline:  
Sep 15, 2013

Special Pub, Edited by:  
Ruth R. Davidson &  
David Speakman



**NOVEMBER  
2013**

**TIGHTBEAM #268**

**STILL NEEDS**

Cover art, interior art, fiction, (2k words or less) comics, essays, letters of comment, poetry, etc.

Deadline:  
Oct 15, 2013

Edited by  
David Speakman



**DECEMBER  
2013**

**TNFF 72.6**

**STILL NEEDS**

*Election Results Issue*

Cover art, interior art, con reports, bureau reports & fan news.

Deadline:  
Nov 15, 2013

Edited by:  
David Speakman



**DECEMBER  
2013**

**N3F 2014 CALENDAR**

**STILL NEEDS**

Cover and interior Art

Deadline:  
Nov 15, 2013

Special Pub,  
Edited by:  
Sarah Harder &  
David Speakman



**JANUARY  
2014**

**TIGHTBEAM #269**

**STILL NEEDS**

Cover art, interior art, fiction, (2k words or less) comics, essays, letters of comment, poetry, etc.

Deadline:  
Dec 15, 2013

Edited by  
David Speakman



**February  
2014**

**TNFF 73.1**

**STILL NEEDS**

*Election Results Issue*

Cover art, interior art, con reports, bureau reports & fan news.

Deadline:  
Jan 15, 2014

Edited by: